

Online study skills resource SPICE project

The online study skills induction resource has been developed to help extend the traditional induction to pre arrival, i.e. before commencing studies in the UK. SPICE is a pilot to test the effectiveness of the resource with a controlled group of Indian students on a Hospitality Management programme at Edinburgh Napier University.

The challenge

The need for pre-arrival induction has been identified on the BA Hospitality Management programme which has large numbers of direct entry Indian students. The students benefit from an extended induction before arrival to ensure an early development of skills and awareness. An additional challenge is a cultural preference to rely on peers for academic as well as pastoral support pre-arrival. The SPICE (Student Pre-arrival Induction for Continuing Education) project enables a gradual development of effective study skills pre arrival, and uses student voices throughout the resource in order to appeal to students before arrival to the UK.

Contents of SPICE

SPICE has been based on students' and staff feedback. The tasks are grouped into 4 blocks:

- Introduction to life and study at the university (including expectations and roles)
- Study skills at Edinburgh Napier University (including key skills such as time management, planning and completing assessments, group work, independent study, critical thinking skills, reflection);
- Academic writing skills (paraphrasing, referencing, essays, reports and case studies);
- Presentation skills (including examples of successful presentations).

SPICE unique features include:

- It is task, not information, driven. Students slowly build their awareness and skills.
- Students complete a series of tasks and receive feedback on their work.
- It is in touch with student experience on the programme by including a range of students' voices from students on the programme.
- It enables students to store their work and module leaders can track students' progress.
- SPICE is the first part of an extended induction process to be continued post-arrival.

Benefits

Students from the Indian sub-continent respond well to peer advice and benefit from working their way through activities, receiving feedback and storing their answers, so they can revisit them post-arrival when the challenges become more real.

Issues

SPICE has been piloted with two cohorts of students in India and the feedback from students and staff has been very positive. The students come from partner colleges in India on established articulation routes. Arrangements are currently put in place to timetable a study skills class based on SPICE in Year 1 and Year 2 of the programme in India. For students coming from agents, an additional support mechanism would have to be considered to ensure the resource is used well by the students.

Next steps

The results of the pilot SPICE project will be used to inform the development of a generic resource for all international students. This will involve including a wider range of student voices, extending the range of tasks, including social networking element, more videos, podcasts and more advanced tracking of students' progress.

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